A 342 712 We jolted our way through the narrow pass commanded by the ruined Crusader castle of Qalaat Mehelbeh, one of the chain of Frankish forts that cover these mountains. Sulaiman Effendi's front drive, though under 30 miles long, climbs 4,000 feet and is only just passable for cars, in spite of forced labour. Muhammad Ali regaled me with tales of past skirmishes, and pointed out the time-honoured defensive positions in the rocks. He knew Sulaiman Murshid well, having once come up to arrest him, and made him walk the whole way down. Presently Major B—— halted on a sharp crest, and a wonderful view lay spread out at our feet.

A 133 311 We could see the houses of Jobit Burghal at the bottom of a huge bowl of cultivated and terraced land; they straggled up the further slope, with the Lord's house, white-painted and boxlike, higher than the rest. On all sides rose rock-covered hills, culminating in the summit of the Alawite mountain ridge about 500 feet above the village. It was almost like a "Shangri La" vision in the clear still air, but possessed a far more savage and stony grandeur than my imaginings of that ideal valley.

A 712 Major B——, who had visited Jobit before, told us it was as well to halt at this point, as Sulaiman kept a watcher permanently stationed on his roof with field-glasses, and the track winding steeply down at our feet was covered from the village at every yard of its length. Having given the Lord time to recognize us, down we went and soon came to our "tentacle," Captain N——, camped in an idyllic spot amid trees and rocks a few hundred yards short of the village. He told us that Sulaiman 000 was expecting us and that the French had been informed of our visit. We decided to pay a courtesy call on the latter first, as they were camped in the ruined houses of a rival chief at the bottom of the village, who had unwisely sided with the gendarmes and had had his houses burnt by the Lord's men and his people driven out for his pains. We were met by some junior French officers as frigidly as could be, and after they had told us that their O.C. the Commandant was away we took our leave. Recollecting scorces of happy and fraternal occasions I had spent with my A French friends, I regretted this extremely stilted meeting. We drove off 363 up the village "street," a succession of hairpin bends and steep rocky slopes more like a river-bed than a road, and, rounding a sharp corner, pulled up in the courtyard of the Lord's house.

A 609 576 S [576] Sulaiman Murshid, flanked by his son Fatteh and some of their henchmen, was on the steps and greeted us with the usual Syrian welcome, "Ahlan wa sahlan." His eighteen stone of bulk and rubicund fleshy face bore witness to his enjoyment of the good things of life and his small evasive eyes reflected a somewhat puzzled frame of mind. Indeed, it took over an hour for him to relax an extreme caution as to which way the wind was blowing for him politically. I introduced Commander S—— as the captain of the "mudammera" which was lying in Latakia harbour below, and gave a few indications of her size and power and of the purpose of her visit to Alawite territory. I found later that Sulaiman Murshid became convinced from local rumour that *Musketeer* could land a stream of shells plumb on his house in Jobit, a happy illusion which I forbore to dispel.

000 We were shown into a salon with nineteenth-century French pro-